

BBC Learning English
Words in the news
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Horse owners hit by downturn



In the UK, a charity that houses unwanted horses says it is being inundated with calls from equestrians who can no longer afford to keep their horses. The Horse Trust has received 640 requests to retire horses in the past month. Mark Worthington reports:

Far from the city, an empty **paddock** and nothing but memories. After 15 years Shelagh Ball was forced to say goodbye to her beloved horse. This is what happens when **the downturn starts to bite**.

SHELAGH BALL: The reason I've had to give up Fred is economics. **Solely and purely** economics. And the effect it's had on me is devastating. I mean I... just heartbreaking. I love that horse and if I **could afford** to keep him, I would for the rest of his life. But I can't.

Shelagh isn't alone. Horse charities say record numbers are **struggling to pay** the bills. First came huge rises in costs - the price of feed doubled. Now there is less money around to pay for it all, and that's **hitting** businesses too. Garron Baines had already given up one horse through sickness. Now he's shutting down his **horse-trekking company**, meaning six more need new homes.

GARRON BAINES: The horse business, or the horse leisure riding has **fallen off the cliff** in the last few weeks as people have looked at their household budgets and decided that it's too expensive to go horse-riding. And at the same time costs have been **mounting significantly** over the last year.

It all means more work for those who care for unwanted animals. But charities fear this is only the beginning and that **donations may begin to dry up** just as huge numbers of horses need their help.

Mark Worthington, BBC

Vocabulary and definitions

paddock	a small area of land where animals, especially horses, are kept
the downturn starts to bite	the economic slowdown begins to have a negative effect
Solely and purely	only, nothing but, nothing other than
could afford	had enough money to
struggling to pay	here, having difficulty paying, not having enough money to easily pay
hitting	damaging, having a bad effect on, affecting negatively
horse-trekking company	a company where people can pay to hire a horse and go horse-riding for pleasure across a natural terrain
fallen off the cliff	suddenly become a lot less popular, shrunk in demand
mounting significantly	growing greatly
donations may begin to dry up	people may begin to give less money, or no money at all to charities

More on this story: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7714802.stm

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/11/081107_horses.shtml